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SAN JOSE COUNCILMEMBERS ASSURE IMMIGRANTS NOT TO FEAR CONTACT WITH LOCAL POLICE OR CITY GOVERNMENT

Today, San Jose Councilmember Sam T. Liccardo, joined by colleagues, Vice Mayor Dave Cortese and Councilmembers Nora Campos and Madison Nguyen, introduced a resolution to address the fears of many members of San Jose's immigrant community in light of recent sweeps by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in nearby counties. ICE is a division of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services.

The resolution comes in the face of increasing apprehension by both undocumented and legal immigrants about the recent spate of raids conducted by ICE. Since June of 2006, ICE has conducted repeated immigration raids under "Operation Return to Sender," targeting criminal aliens for deportation. Raids in recent months in Watsonville, Santa Cruz, Redwood City, and Contra Costa County, however, have also netted scores of immigrants who have had no criminal involvement or arrests. ICE recently reported that of the 119 persons arrested in a set of sweeps in Contra Costa County in January, 18 were criminals, while 94 were persons who never appeared on ICE's list.

San Jose Chief of Police Rob Davis noted, "Our Department remains committed to our longstanding policy that we do not arrest people based solely upon their immigration status." Chief Davis continued, "Our Department has been able to maintain San Jose's status as the Safest Big City in America in part because of the trust and cooperation that exists between us and the community. When people fear calling the police to report crimes or to provide valuable witness information because of their immigration status, the community loses." He further noted, "We need to maintain the cooperation and communication we have with San Jose's many immigrant communities in order to do our jobs effectively."

Councilmember Liccardo expressed his gratitude to "Chief Davis and our police department for their continued commitment to serving all of the members of our community." Liccardo continued, "From my conversations with community leaders, it has become apparent that ICE's sweeps in other counties will cause both undocumented and legal immigrants to fear interaction with governmental authorities in ways that can undermine the health, safety, and well-being of our community." He added, "As a former criminal prosecutor, I know how difficult it is to assure victims of sexual assault and domestic violence to come forward where they believe that contact with the authorities could subject their family members to deportation. To the extent that fear silences members of our immigrant community, we are all made less safe."

Councilmember Madison Nguyen stated, "I want to reassure the undocumented immigrant community who live, work, and abide by our laws, that they should not be intimidated by the rapid raids. As the Chair of Public Safety, Finance, and Strategic Support Committee, I will work with San Jose Police Department to regularly monitor that immigrant status not be a primary reason for one's arrest." She further stated, "I will look to promote better interaction between our public safety officers and the immigrant community." The proposed resolution, introduced before the Council's Rules Committee today, seeks to:

- Reaffirm the San Jose Police Department's longstanding policy that its officers will not to arrest persons merely for their unlawful presence in the United States.
- Reaffirm that no otherwise law-abiding undocumented immigrants should fear arrest or deportation for coming forward to report a crime, or for contacting any employee of the City of San Jose to express concerns or to ask questions.

- Express the view of the San Jose City Council that continued ICE raids—while laudable where they target violent or predatory criminals for deportation—can have harsh unintended consequences. Those sweeps that have cast the net widely to arrest otherwise law-abiding undocumented immigrants have raised the Council's concern, insofar as they undermine the ability of our police, fire department, and other city agencies to interact in fearful immigrant communities, leaving all of San Jose's residents less safe.

On Saturday, February 24, from 11 am to 12:30 pm, the Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform (CCIR) and People Acting in Community Together (PACT) will be hosting an Immigration Town Hall Meeting, at St Patrick Proto-Cathedral at 389 East Santa Clara Street in San Jose. Residents will meet with Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren, District Attorney Dolores Carr, Councilmember Liccardo, and a representative from the San Jose Police Department, to share concerns and discuss options. Additional information regarding the Town Hall meeting can be obtained from Daniela Santos, 835- 6708 or Matt Hammer, 373-6993.

RELEASE ALSO MADE AVAILABLE IN SPANISH